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October 6, 2000

PRESS RELEASE

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**State Department of Mental Health Approves Coalinga as Site
for New State Hospital**

Sacramento – In a signing ceremony in the Coalinga City Council Chambers, State Mental Health Director Stephen W. Mayberg, Ph.D., Director today certified the final Environmental Impact Report and approved the site for a new state hospital that will be built immediately adjacent to the Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga in western Fresno County.

"We are pleased with the support the Department has received from Coalinga and other nearby communities for construction of the hospital in this area," said Mayberg. In addition to strong local community support, Mayberg said the selection of Coalinga was based on positive environmental factors, lower cost of construction, the proximity to the labor pool of the Central Valley, and next to an existing state prison as required by law.

"This site has minimal environmental problems and we believe it provides a positive opportunity for employment in this region. The facility will have the double benefit of providing a facility dedicated to the treatment of individuals that have a history of repeat sexual offenses while making a significant economic contribution to communities of the Central Valley," Mayberg said.

On September 22, the State Department of Mental Health (DMH) released the Final EIR. The DMH received no protests and/or negative comments. The certification of the final EIR and approval of the project concludes a two-year search that included 29 potential sites and EIRs that evaluated two candidates sites.

The 1500-bed facility will cost an estimated \$365,000,000 to build and will have an annual operating budget of \$100-\$150 million. Additionally, the 2000-2001 budget provides \$6 million for mitigation impact on local agencies for schools and public services.

The hospital staff of approximately 2000 will include physicians, psychologists, pharmacists, psychiatric social workers, nurses and psychiatric technicians in addition to many other jobs that support the administration of the hospital. The jobs will cover every wage and skill level, from administrators and clinicians to electricians and janitors. "Every possible effort will be made to employ local residents," Mayberg said.

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The DMH is scheduled to make a presentation to the Public Works Board at its November 10 meeting to get approval for preliminary plans and authorization to proceed with working drawings. Based on the current schedule, construction is expected to begin in the summer 2001 and will be completed by October 2004. The hospital will be administered by the Department of Mental Health. The Department of Corrections will provide perimeter security.

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